



e-COMESA

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About COMESA

COMESA is the largest African economic grouping. The Member States are Burundi, Comoros, Democratic Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Egypt, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Kenya, Libya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Rwanda, Seychelles, Swaziland, Sudan, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe

In the year 2000, COMESA launched the first ever African Free Trade Area, which currently comprises eleven Member States. These area:- Burundi, Djibouti, Egypt, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Rwanda, Sudan, Zambia and Zimbabwe. COMESA is scheduled to launch a Customs Union in 2008

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COMESA And Michigan State University Sign MoU On Expansion of regional trade in food



Secretary General Mwencha exchanging the signed MoU with Professor Thomas Jayne, Professor of International development in the Department of Agricultural Economics at the Michigan State University. The signing ceremony took place on 25th January at the COMESA Secretariat in Lusaka

COMESA has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Department of Agricultural Economics of Michigan State University, USA. The objectives of the MOU are, firstly, to provide COMESA with additional perspectives for facilitating further expansion of regional trade in food staples in order to stimulate agricultural production growth, broad-based income expansion and poverty reduction. Secondly, the MOU will seek to develop a broad program of research and outreach aimed at enhancing regional food security through improved regional marketing systems for food staples. Thirdly, the MOU will facilitate the capacity building of regional and national agricultural policy

research organizations.

The MoU was granted a go ahead by the COMESA Council of Ministers at the Summit held in Djibouti last November (2006).

“COMESA has taken leadership in implementing the Comprehensive Africa Agricultural Development Programme (CAADP). The overall goal of CAADP is to ‘Help African countries reach a higher path of economic growth through agriculturally-led development, which eliminates hunger, reduces poverty and food insecurity, and enables expansion of exports,” read a statement issued by the Secretariat at the end of the signing ceremony.

CAADP aims at increasing agricultural growth rates to six percent per year to create the wealth needed for rural communities and households in Africa to prosper. To achieve this goal, CAADP directs investment to four mutually reinforcing 'pillars' (i) extending the area under sustainable land management and reliable water control systems; (ii) improving rural infrastructure and trade-related capacities for improved market access; (iii) increasing food supply and reducing hunger; and (iv) agricultural research, technology dissemination and adoption. Each of these pillars incorporates policy, institutional reform and capacity building.

In order to effectively implement the CAADP agenda as a tool for attaining the Millennium Development Goal for cutting hunger and poverty, COMESA has forged partnerships with various stakeholders within and outside the region to ensure an informed implementation of agricultural programs. To date, agreements have been concluded with regional organizations such as ASARECA, FANRPAN and SACAU. On the international front, an agreement has been concluded with the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI). Michigan State University is the second key international agricultural research entity that COMESA is partnering with after IFPRI.



Officials from COMESA Secretariat and Michigan State

University witnessed the signing ceremony.

Food Security Situation Records Slight Improvement

The COMESA region recorded a tremendous improvement in the food security situation during the 2005/2006 season. The region as whole recorded a food surplus, estimated at 550,000 metric tons of cereals. This was announced by COMESA Secretary General Mr Erastus Mwencha. He said while few countries had some deficits, five countries (Zambia, Malawi, Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda) had varying levels of surpluses for an overall food surplus of 550,000 tons for the COMESA region.

“Current reports are indicating that for the 2006/2007 season, the region is experiencing an El-Nino, a situation where the oceans are warmer than usual thereby resulting in conditions where parts of the region are excessively dry while others experience heavy rainfall. The symptoms so far indicate that the Southern part of COMESA, in countries such as Zimbabwe and Swaziland, rainfall will be lower than usual. In the eastern part of COMESA, rainfall amounts will be higher than usual (including Northern Zambia and all Eastern African countries),” Mr Mwencha said.

Reports of flooding will be experienced in parts of Zambia, Malawi, Burundi, Rwanda, Kenya, Ethiopia and Sudan. Crop performance may thus be affected during the 2006/2007 production season by a mix of drought pockets and incidences of flooding. Having come from a surplus season, however, the region is not expected to experience drastic food shortages. Challenges of infrastructure however will make it difficult for internal distribution of available food.

Mr Mwencha said that at the start 2007, the food security status of many households across the region remains stable, although there are signs that household food supplies are now tightening as the hungry season peaks. Food prices have generally remained stable and below last year and the past five years' average, but prices noticeably increased in December in select markets, indicating decreasing market supplies and raising concerns about growing food access problems among vulnerable populations. In much of the region, intra-regional trade (formal and informal) continues to play an important role in filling food import requirements.

He pointed out that COMESA has put up initiatives to address the food insecurity. COMESA, with the support of the African Development Bank (AfDB), has reached an advanced stage in developing a web based market information system that will provide information to the member States on the food supply and demand situation prevailing in the region at any given time. This system will provide a platform for linking suppliers and buyers of agricultural commodities in the region and thereby enhancing food security through trade between surplus and deficit areas.

Further, under the Comprehensive Africa Agricultural Development Programme (CAADP), COMESA is initiating implementation of programs to address the development of agriculture in a holistic manner and meet the specific needs of communities such as pastoralists and others who tend to be vulnerable to climatic and market volatilities. Accordingly, the region expects reduced incidences of food deficits as these programmes take root.

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High Level COMESA Delegations Heads to Washington

A delegation of agribusiness leaders jointly led by COMESA Secretary General Mr Erastus Mwencha and Ugandan Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Agriculture Mr David Gabindadde-Musoke will over the period of February 12-16 2007 be in Washington DC to promote the Comprehensive Africa Agricultural Development Project (CAADP).

The mission is part of the COMESA agricultural sector investment promotional efforts under CAADP.

Senior Agricultural Advisor at the COMESA Secretariat Dr Cris Muyunda told e-comesa that the mission is very important and it will further strengthen the relationship between COMESA and the United States Government.

“Majority of COMESA citizens derive a livelihood from agriculture and given the need for increased investments in agriculture and agro-processing, the COMESA delegation will have in-depth discussions with the US EXIM BANK, the Overseas

Private Investment Corporation and the Corporate Council on Africa. COMESA will also hold a US/COMESA Trade and Investment Framework Meeting, make a presentation to the US Congressional Research Service, meet the Administrator of USAID and hold discussions with the World Bank," Dr Muyunda added.

Several US based development Non Governmental organizations will also hold meetings with the COMESA delegation.

Mr Mwencha is also expected to make a presentation on February 14th at the special public event titled "The Doha Development Round: What's At Stake for Africa?"

This event is being organized by the International Food and Agricultural Trade Policy Council and the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars
